

# A COLLECTION OF TRACTS.

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| <p>I. A Dissertation on 2 Theff. ii. 1, ---- 12: In which it is shown, that <i>the Bishop of Rome is the man of sin</i>, &amp;c.</p> <p>II. A letter to a friend, concerning the end and design of prayer. Or the reasonableness of praying to an unchangeably wise, powerful and good God. In answer to the objections of the <i>modern infidels</i>.</p> <p>III. A postscript to the letter on prayer, concerning the views which we ought to have in praying; the drawing up proper forms; the use of scripture language; the confession of such sins only, as we are conscious we have been guilty of.</p> | <p>IV. The 30th dissertation of <i>Maximus Tyrius</i>, concerning this question, <i>Whether we ought to pray to God, or no?</i><br/>Translated from the <i>Greek</i>.</p> <p>V. Remarks on the foregoing dissertation of <i>Maximus Tyrius</i>.</p> <p>VI. The doctrine of prædestination reviewed. Or the nature of the councils and decrees of God; and the rise and occasion of the scripture language concerning them.</p> <p>VII. A brief account of <i>Calvin's</i> causing <i>Servetus</i> to be burned, at <i>Geneva</i>, for an heretic.</p> |
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The THIRD EDITION, corrected and enlarged.

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To which are now added, by way of SUPPLEMENT.

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| <p>VIII. A Defence of the Brief account of <i>Calvin's</i> treatment of <i>Servetus</i>.</p> <p>IX. A brief account of <i>Archbishop Laud's</i> cruel treatment of Dr.</p> | <p><i>Leighton</i>.</p> <p>X. An essay, concerning the belief of things, which are above reason. And,<br/>A general preface.</p> |
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By GEORGE BENSON, D.D.

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L O N D O N:

Printed and Sold by J. WAUGH, in *Gracechurch-street*; J. NOON, in *Cheapside*; A. MILLAR, in the *Strand*; J. DAVIDSON, in the *Poultry*; R. KING, in *Fore-street*; M. COOPER, in *Pater-noster-Row*; and J. ROBINSON, in *Ludgate-street*. MDCC XLVIII.

# COLLECTION

## TRACTS

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THE GENERAL  
P R E F A C E

To this COLLECTION of  
T R A C T S.



*HERE have already been two editions of seven of the following Tracts, printed separately. And, by the advice of some friends, they are now collected into one volume, with some additions and alterations.*

A popish Priest (as it was thought) wrote against the Psalter's-Hall Anti-popish Sermons. And he published at the end of that work, — “ An extract out of Bishop Montague's appeal, (Chap. V. p. 149, &c.) concerning Mahomet; offered to the consideration of Mr. Chandler, and of The Author of The Dissertation, on 2 Thess. ii.” Bishop Montague's character, and his great leaning towards Popery, are very well known. And, indeed, whoever would have made interest at Court, and stood fair for preferment, in that reign; when a Popish Queen bore so great a sway, could not take a more effectual method; than by attempting to prove, that the Pope was not Antichrist, The man of sin,

*or the tyrannical and oppressive power prophesied of, in holy scripture: who would apostatize from pure Christianity; corrupt the religion of Jesus; and persecute the true professors of it.*

*The consequences of the spread of Popery are so horrible; and our danger, from the detestable and unprovoked rebellion 1745, is so fresh in our minds; the zeal of Popish emissaries is so great, and their diligence (after repeted disappointments) so constant, restless and unwearied, that Protestant divines should never be off their guard; but ought to take all fair methods of fortifying the minds of their own people; and guarding them against that amazing apostasy, and every tendency thereto.*

*Our first reformers were convinced that this grand corruption of the pure religion of Jesus was planely foretold. And accordingly, they made use of this, as one argument, among many others, to overthrow Popery; and to confirm the Protestant religion, and the free use of the Scriptures.*

*This continued to be the prevailing opinion of the greatest and best of our English divines, till the latter end of the reign of King James the first. But then, our Princes, marrying into popish families, gave a check to this sort of language; and rendered the opinion quite ungenteel and unfashionable. It was not the way to preferment; nor looked upon, as a proper complaisance to the Court, to point out the Bishop of Rome as the man of sin, &c. And*  
Bishop



## The P R E F A C E. ▼

*Bishop Montague was among the most forward and zealous to beat down such an opinion. He, therefore, racked his invention to prove Mahomet to be the person, and not the Pope. But (though, by such methods, he rose to a Bishoprick, and was a favorite divine at court) his arguments are neverthelesse vain and inconclusive. For,*

(1.) *Suppose Constantinople to stand upon seven hills. It is notorious that antient Rome did so likewise. And Constantinople was not the city, which then reigned over the Kings of the earth. Whereas these two marks were both united in St. John's prophetic description of spiritual Babylon; the seat of idolatry, persecution, and all manner of vice, Rev. xvii. 9; 18.*

(2.) *This man of sin was prophesied of, as one that would come with all power, and signs, and lying wonders. Now the learned men among the Mahometans allow that their prophet worked no miracles; and Mahomet himself, in the Koran, lays no claim to them. Whereas the pretences to miracles, in the Church of Rome, are notorious and numberlesse.*

(3.) *If authorities could signifie any thing, we might confront the authority of Bishop Montague, not only with that of the great and incomparable Sir Isaac Newton, and a vast number of the most learned and best of the Protestant divines; but even with that of Estius, who was a more learned man than Bishop Montague, and a professed Papist. For, in his*  
*notes*



vi.           The P R E F A C E.

*notes on 1 John ii. 22. he expressly declares,  
“ that Mahomet could not be the Antichrist,  
“ spoken of, in Scripture, as appears from  
“ 2 Theff. ii. For he neither pretended to be  
“ a God; nor was his coming with all pow-  
“ er, and signs, and lying wonders, &c.”*

*However, we rely on the strength of our arguments, and not on any mere human authority whatever.*

*The first edition of the Letter on prayer was translated into high-dutch, at Vienna, about ten or eleven years ago; with a recommendatory preface; — by the reverend and learned Dr. Kortholt, who is now a Professor of Divinity, in the university of Gottingen, in the Electorate of Hanover.*

*In the second edition, there were a great many additions and alterations. In this third edition, there are some few corrections and alterations, which were not in either of the former editions.*

*The texts, relating to election and reprobation, deserve to be more critically examined than I have yet seen. But enough has been said to lead Christians into the proper interpretation. And, indeed, the generality of Christians, among us, seem now to be fully satisfied, that absolute and unconditional election and reprobation are not the doctrines, either of right reason, or of holy scripture.*

*If*

## The PREFACE.

vii.

*If 2500, which I take to be about a fourth part, of the Jews, in and about this great city, were to be converted to Christianity: And, in order to their joining in communion with one, or more, of our Christian churches, should insist upon it, that the English Christians should be circumcised, and take on them the observation of the Law of Moses, as well as that of the gospel of Christ: — Then the old controversie, which made such a noise in the apostles days, would be revived; and the Epistles of St. Paul (particularly to the Romans and to the Galatians) would be understood with more clearnesse and emphasis, than they have been commonly, in these later ages of the Christian church.*

*But as, at present, this is not likely to obtain in fact, we must suppose things in such a situation; and keep that supposition in view, as constantly and clearly as we are able: And then we shall not misse of the scope of the Apostle's reasoning.*

*The brief account of Calvin's causing Servetus to be burned, at Geneva, for an heretic, has (I understand) displeased some persons. When it was published, without a name, in some papers of The Old Whig, there was no such clamor raised against it. If I had published it, a second time, without my name, it would have been said, That I was ashamed to own it. When I published it with my name, then it gave the offence. This has led me to offer an apology for my publishing it; to assign the reasons*



*reasons, which induced me to it; and to answer the principal objections, which have been raised against it.*

*I have no malice, nor ill-will, to Calvin, nor to any of the human race. I wish no harm to his followers, but the greatest possible good; but I dislike persecution and uncharitableness, wherever I find them.*

*For that reason, I have added the brief account of Archbishop Laud's cruel treatment of Dr. Leighton: Not to exasperate any person, or party; but to deter all from a spirit of uncharitableness; and to cause us, if possible, to repete our animosities no more.*

*The essay concerning the belief of things, which are above reason, has lain by me, some time. And is now published, that Christians may understand one another; and that infidels may no longer misrepresent and insult us, upon this head.*

*To promote truth, peace, liberty, charity, and the most diffusive happiness to mankind, is the great end, for which I desire to live; and that glorious cause, for which (if I should be called to it) I look upon myself as obliged, even to dare to die.*

Prescot-street, Goodman's-fields.

London, September 1, 1747.

N. B. *The Supplement* is published by itself; for the sake of those, who have the former editions of the other pamphlets; and do not choose to buy this Collection of Tracts.

C O N-





A  
D E F E N C E  
O F T H E

*Brief Account of CALVIN'S Treat-  
ment of SERVETUS, against some  
Objections which have been made  
to it.*

O B J E C T I O N I.



SOME have insinuated that the facts are false.

*Answer.* Upon seeing it proved that the facts are false, by solid proofs and impartial evidence, they shall be otherwise related. Till then, they must stand as they are. The evidence of his professed adversaries will not easily be admitted. *Episcopus* (on 1 *John* i. 1. Vol. II, of his works, p. 174. Col. II.) intimates that some represent the followers of *Servetus* as *Arians*. And then adds, — “ Although he

“ seems to have held a very different opinion,  
 “ as we may see from *Calvin*. For we have  
 “ not been allowed to see *Servetus*’s own wri-  
 “ tings.”

*John Fox* (in his *Acts and Monuments*,  
 Vol. II. p. 534.) first represents the *Papists*  
 as burning those whom they term *Heretics*.

“ And yet (*sais he*) the malignity of those  
 “ adversaries doeth not here cease. For, af-  
 “ ter that the fire hath consumed their bo-  
 “ dies, then they fall upon their books; and  
 “ condemn them, in like manner, to be  
 “ burned. And no man must be so hardy  
 “ as to read them, or keep them, under  
 “ pain of *heresie*. But, before they have a-  
 “ bolished these books, first they gather ar-  
 “ ticles out of them, such as they list  
 “ themselves: and so perversly wrest and  
 “ wring them, after their own purpose, false-  
 “ ly, and contrary to the right meaning of  
 “ the author; as may seem, after their put-  
 “ ting down, to be most *heretical* and *exe-*  
 “ *crable*. Which being done, and the books  
 “ then abolished, that no man may confer  
 “ [or *compare*] them with their articles, to  
 “ spie their falshood; then they divulge and  
 “ set abroad those articles, in such sort as  
 “ princes and people may see what *heretics*  
 “ they were. And this is the rigor of their  
 “ processe and proceeding against these persons,  
 “ whom thus they purpose to condemn and  
 “ burn.”

When



When violent men and fierce persecutors have procured the death of one who differs in opinion from them, and have burned his books, I confesse I am greatly inclined to call in question their representations of his opinions; and desire further evidence, concerning the truth and reality of them; or a more fair, candid, and impartial representation of what his sentiments really were.

If his worst opinions are fit to be picked out of his writings and published, in order to be confuted: Why may we not read them in his own writings? Why is he not permitted to speak for himself? Surely every man best understands his own sentiments; and his own writings are the most likely to give one the most just idea of them.

We know very well, that a man's own words may be so quoted, as to represent his opinions in quite another manner, than they appear in his own writings, when read in their proper connection. — How much more, when a word is added, or left out; or another substituted in its place.

What party will allow, that their fiercest adversaries have justly represented their sentiments: notwithstanding they have quoted their very words; and, perhaps, referred to the page, from which they have copied them?

One might mention authors, who, in the heat of controverſie, have misrepresented the



opinions of their adversaries; even while their adversaries have been alive, and their books very common. — What would such have done, with respect to the dead; especially if their books had been burned; and a fair representation of their real sentiments could not have been come at?

*Object. II.* It hath been inquired, *why is this account published now?*

*Ans.* To this it may be replied, by another inquiry, which was actually made, by some plain, honest people, in the country, upon their reading *The brief account*. — “Is this true (said they?) And, if it be true, why were we not told of it before?”

*Object. III.* Why are *Calvin's* faults rip'd up, and his failings thus expos'd to public view?”

*Ans.* Why has the scripture mentioned the faults of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*; and especially of *King David*? Why is it left upon record, that the apostle *Peter* three times denied his Lord and Master; and that at last with oaths and imprecations? Why! but to let us see that some good men have had great faults and blemishes in their characters? And to caution us to beware of those, and like crimes? I acknowledge, *Calvin* helped forward the Reformation from Popery; for which reason I revere his memory. But was *Calvin* a better man than the patriarchs, prophets and apostles? Why then should

should we show more tenderneſſe to his character, than the ſcriptures have ſhown to them and their characters? It is this palliating the vices of great men, and ſhutting our eyes upon their crimes, that has been the ruine of virtue and true religion. If *Calvin* did wrong, in *perſecuting* his Chriſtian brother, let us not ſcreen *Calvin*, but condemn *perſecution* in friend or enemy; leſt it be ſuſpected that we condemn it in our enemies only, but like it in our friends, and thoſe of our own party.

*Object. IV.* “ *Servetus* called *Calvin* ſeveral hard names, and gave him abundance of ill language; ſo that *Calvin* had received great provocation, by the treatment he had met with, from that worthleſſe man.”

*Anſ.* It was too much the cuſtom of that age to uſe virulent language in controverſy, and call their adverſaries many hard names. And *Servetus* is greatly to be blamed for his indecent language. But then it ought to be remembered that *Calvin* uſed very harſh language in return; and did not come much behind *Servetus* in calling hard names, and treating his adverſary with opprobrious terms. — And that, about two hours before he was executed, *Servetus* begged *Calvin*'s pardon for all the abuſive language he had uſed towards him: But we do not find that *Calvin* begged his pardon, though he had uſed very coarſe



language to *Servetus*: And, what is more, had procured against him the most dreadful sentence of being *burned to death*.

However, I think it evident, that a man is not to be burned to death, for having used sharp and unmannerly language, either in conversation or controversy.

*Object. V.* It has been objected, “ That I  
“ take the part of *Servetus*, and thereby plane-  
“ ly show that I am of his sentiments. Now,  
“ to patronize so vile a wretch, in order to  
“ wound the character of *Calvin*, is very  
“ amazing.”

*Ans.* Surely they have not read *The brief account*, who can talk in this manner. I am so far from being of *Servetus*’s sentiments; that, in some respects, I do not well know what his sentiments were. In other particulars, where I do understand him, I greatly differ from him. And there are some of his opinions; which (if his adversaries have represented them justly) I abhor and detest.

He seems to me very often to have had a very confused notion of his subject, and was far from expressing himself intelligibly and clearly. I do, by no means, think that he explained the Scriptures well; or was a solid, judicious critic. But what then? Must a man be burned alive, because he has a confused head? If so, *Lord have mercy upon the multitude! and even upon some persons, who greatly differ in opinion from Servetus!* The more weak



weak and injudicious *Servetus* was, the more should *Calvin* have pitied him; and used him with more humanity and tenderneſſe, in order to have compoſed his mind, and to have brought him to more clear views of what was true and right.

*Object. VI.* It has been asked, “Have  
“ not you gratified the *Papists*, by blacken-  
“ ing the character of the great reformer?”

*Anſ.* Did not the *Papists* know of this ſtory long ago? Or could it have been concealed from them, ſuppoſe I had not publiſhed it?

However, it is my opinion that, if any of the *Papists* read *the Brief Account*, they will not thank me for it, nor be much gratified thereby. For I have intimated that *the Church of Rome* is the *mother of perſecution*, as well as of many other *abominations*; that, in her communion, *Calvin* learned his uncharitableneſſe and bigotry; that from thence he derived his perſecuting principles; and that he could not ſhake off that moſt cruel and worſt part of *Popery*, when he ſhook off the authority of the *Pope*, and many of their ſuperſtitions and abſurdities.

The beſt way to ſupport *the reformation*, is, freely to condemn all the falſe principles and unjuſtifiable conduct of the *reformers*, and of all other *Proteſtants*; and to defend that alone, which can be defended by right reaſon and ſcripture juſtly applied.

But,

But, if we will defend the faults of *Protestants*, and justifie *persecution* in them; we shall never be able thoroughly to defend the *reformed religion*; and overthrow the persecuting, uncharitable principles of the *Church of Rome*.

*Object. VII.* “Attacking *Calvin*, in this manner, is insinuating that all his followers are of his principles; and would persecute those that differ from them, if it were in their power.”

*Ans.* I do not believe that all *Calvinists* are of his persecuting principles, nor have I intimated any such thing. But such as are guilty, of all sects and parties, I thought it my duty to condemn. And I would willingly hope that, if any *Calvinists* have been of *their Master's* narrow sentiments hitherto, they will consider to what lengths such a temper may possibly lead them; and thereby be induced to throw off such a bigoted, narrow, and unchristian spirit<sup>a</sup>.

*Object.*

<sup>a</sup> Mr. *Emlyn* (in his reply to Mr. *Martin*, &c. p. 253.) saies, “That *Beza's* annotations were printed by *Stephens*, at *Geneva*, at a time and place, flaming with bitter zeal and prejudice against all *Antitrinitarians*; where *Servetus* had been cruelly burned at the stake, but three years before, at the instigation of *Calvin*. And *Beza* was so full of it, that, in these very annotations, he could not forbear justifying the fact. Having mentioned *Servetus's* standing in his opinions even to death, [in his note on 2 Pet. i. 4.] he adds an ironical scoff, not much lesse cruel  
“than



*Object.* VIII. "Should you have published  
" the faults of our great reformer, at a  
" time when *Christianity itself* is so boldly  
" struck at; and all the principles of *reli-*  
" *gion* so daringly called in question?"

*Answ.* One thing, which has increased the  
number of *infidels*, has been the *Christians*  
making use of so many *pious frauds*, and  
winking hard at the faults of persons of their  
own way; while they have opened their eyes  
wide upon the mistakes and foibles of those  
of a different party.

If ever we would defend our *common*  
*Christianity* effectually, and answer the *An-*  
*tirevelationists* to any good purpose, we must  
give up those *principles* and *practices* which  
cannot be fairly defended, and hold fast those  
alone which may be supported by *truth* and  
*evidence*.

It is now above 200 years since the com-  
mencement of *the reformation*. Is it not,  
then, a shame and a reproach to *protestants*  
of all denominations, that there should yet  
be among them any pretences to infallibility;  
or

"than his death itself; *sunt tamen, qui magnam bono*  
" *viro injuriam putant factam; i. e. yst, good man!*  
" *some think he had great wrong done him.*"

Now, in my edition of *Beza* (printed at Cambridge  
1642.) I have the pleasure to find, that this bitter sar-  
casm is left out. And, from thence conclude, that  
*Beza*, upon mature consideration, saw he had gone too  
far; and that it was no wonder, *some thought that Ser-*  
*vetus had great wrong done him.*—All such retractations  
are very commendable.

or any remains of bigotry and *persecution*; the very worst part of *Fopery*? That the free, noble and generous spirit of *benevolence* and *liberty* has not yet had an universal spread among them; and rooted out the *spirit of persecution and uncharitableness*, in all the kinds and degrees thereof? If such a spirit and temper were diffused among us and prevailed, the more sober and considerate enemies of *revelation* would be more ready to hearken to what we have to say. And, as to the body of them, who have never read the *Bible* through, with any tolerable care and attention; who wish *Christianity* may be false, because it is convenient for them that it should be so; inasmuch as it condemns their vices, and threatens them with a righteous judgment to come, and a terrible hereafter; — when we had gained the more virtuous and judicious, such loose and abandoned persons, would either be put out of countenance, as having nothing plausible to say in their own vindication; — or they would show mankind, *That they are against revelation, purely because revelation is against them.*

At a time when *all religion* is so boldly struck at, we ought not to load *religion* with the pretended power and authority of any man, or number of men. We ought to content ourselves with being *Christians*, and not lift ourselves into a *party*, and glory in the name of particular *heads* and *leaders*. One  
alone



alone is our master, our head and our Lord, viz. *Jesus Christ*; and we should glory in *his name* only: We should take our religion from his word, and make that the *sole standard*.—Then should we bring about *the most glorious reformation, ideed!* not by burning of *heretics* (i. e. of persons who differ from us, no more than we differ from them) not by hunting down those whom we cannot convince;—but by the force of evidence, and in the spirit of love and meeknesse; by kind treatment, invincible arguments, and inoffensive, holy and exemplary lives. Then would *the glorious spirit of liberty and charity* flow in every vein, and beat in every pulse; the most *godlike benevolence* warm every heart, and influence every action. Then would *the salvation of God be nigh unto them that fear him, and glory dwell in our land! mercy and truth would meet together: righteousness and peace would imbrace each other! Truth would spring out of the earth, and righteousness look down from heaven!*

This is a *reformation* devoutly to be wished for, by every humane and virtuous man! *A spectacle, which God might look down upon with pleasure!* A reformation, which would bring glory to God on high, peace on earth, and the most extensive benevolence among men!

God

14 *A Defence of the Account of, &c.*

God grant that it may be effected, and take place speedily; not only in our happy island, but over the face of the whole globe! And may every creature, in heaven and on earth, with one unanimous, applauding voice, say, *Even so, Amen!*



TRACT.



\*\*\*\*\*

A BRIEF  
A C C O U N T  
O F  
Archbishop *L A U D*'s  
Cruel TREATMENT of  
Doctor *L E I G H T O N*.

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A B R I E F  
A C C O U N T

OF  
Archbishop J. A. D's

and Treatment of

Doctor J. B. I G H T O N


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A B R I E F  
A C C O U N T  
O F

Archbishop *LAUD*'s cruel Treatment of Doctor *LEIGHTON*.

 T has been objected that I have published *Calvin*'s treatment of *Servetus*, because I dislike *Calvin*'s peculiar sentiments.

*Answer.* I have deferred the consideration of this objection 'till now, that I might answer it by itself, and more at large.

As for my agreement with, or differing from, the principles of *Calvin*, I only take the same liberty with him, that I do with every other fallible man; *i. e.* I agree with him, as far as I apprehend he agrees with *right reason* and *scripture*; but, where I apprehend he differs from them, I look upon it as my duty to differ from him, and frankly and honestly to declare my sentiments.

B

I will

I will take away no man's liberty from him; neither shall any man, with my consent, take away my liberty from me. I call no man *Master*, upon earth. *Jesus Christ*, and he alone, is my master, and my guide. *Fathers* and *councils*, *antients* and *moderns*, are all alike to me. In what I think them right, I follow them; in what I think them wrong, I make no scruple of rejecting their opinions. No venerable names shall induce me to imbrace what I apprehend to be false. No branded names shall deter me from receiving what appears to me to be true.

But, to show that I like *persecution* no better in an *Arminian* than in *Calvin* himself, I will set before the reader a brief account of *Archbishop Laud's* treatment of *The Reverend Alexander Leighton*, D. D. <sup>r</sup> father to the pious and excellent *Archbishop Leighton*, whom *Bishop Burnet* so highly applauds, in *the history of his own life and times*.

In the year 1629. during the session of parliament, Dr. *Leighton* published a book, which gave great offence. The occasion of his writing it

<sup>r</sup> See *Rushworth*, p. 55. *Oldmixon's History of the Stuarts*, Vol. I. p. 110. N. B. Mr. *Oldmixon* copied his account from a MS. drawn up by Dr. *Leighton* himself, which was presented to *Parliament*. See also Mr. *Pierce's Vindication*, &c. p. 177, &c. Mr. *Neale's History of the Puritans*, Vol. II. p. 217, 218; 385, 386. Mr. *Chandler's Introduction*, prefixed to his translation of *Limborch's History of the Inquisition*, p. 81, &c. His *History of Persecution*, p. 367, &c. And his two *Letters to Dr. Berriman*.



it was this, *The high-commission court*, and the *spiritual courts*, had rendered Dr. *Laud* (who was then *Bishop of London*) and his brethren, odious to the nation; and therefore several gentlemen and citizens went to Dr. *Leighton's* house, in *Black-Friars, London*, to desire him to draw up articles against the oppression of those *Prælates*; — which, after much persuasion, he did. And those articles, with his expatiating upon them, made up a book, which he intitled, *An appeal to parliament, or Zion's plea against Prælacy*. He was then desired to go beyond sea and print it: which he would not do; 'till several pious, learned, and judicious divines and gentlemen (some of whom were members of parliament) had seen it; and he had about 500 hands set to it, by way of approbation.

Then Dr. *Leighton* went abroad, and returned to *England*, after some time, with some printed copies of that book; which was printed at his own great expence and losse. Two copies of it were delivered to *the parliament*, two days before they were dissolved. And, when it came to be perused, it was found that he had spoken, not only with freedom, but with very great rudeness and indecency, against *Bishops*, calling them *men of blood*; and saying, “ We do not read of a  
“ greater persecution, and higher indignities,  
“ against God's people, in any nation, than  
“ in this, since the death of Queen *Eliza-*

"*beth.*" He called the *Prælacy* of the Church, *Antichristian*; he spoke vehemently against the *Canons* and *ceremonies*; and said, "That the Church hath her laws from the *Scripture*, and that no King may make laws for the *house of God.*" He called the *Popish* queen, *a daughter of Heth*: and concluded with saying, "What pity it is that so ingenuous and tractable a King, should be so monstrously abused by *the Bishops*, to the undoing of himself and his subjects?"

The warmth and freedom of these expressions is not to be justified; yet let the benevolent and unprejudiced reader judge, whether they bear any proportion to the sentence, that was passed, and executed, upon him.

Not long after the book had been delivered to the *parliament*, two *high-commission pursuivants* arrested Dr. *Leighton*, as he was coming out of *Black-Friars Church*, from hearing a sermon: and, with a multitude of staves and bills, draged him to the house of Dr. *Laud*, then *Bishop of London*. As they were carrying him along; they, all the way, called him by the opprobrious names of *Jesuit* and *Traytor*. In the *Bishop of London's* house, he was imprisoned, and a strong guard set over him. There he was kept, without food, till seven in the evening; when Dr. *Laud*, *Bishop of London*, and Dr. *Corbet*, *Bishop of Oxford*, came from *Fulham-House*, with a great number of attendents. Dr. *Leighton* then



then demanded an hearing: and one of the pursuivants made as if he should have had one. But, instead of that, the goaler of *Newgate* was sent for, who came with a strong power of halberts and staves; and claping Dr. *Leighton* in irons, they carried him through a blind, hollow, subterraneous passage into *Newgate*; where opening a gate into the street (which some say had not been opened since the days of *bloody Queen Mary*) they thrust him into a loathsome and ruinous dog-hole, full of rats and mice; which had no light, but what came through a little grate. There, the roof being uncovered, the snow and rain beat in upon him. He had no beding, nor any place to make a fire, but the ruines of an old, smoaky chimney. There he was kept, without meat or drink, from tuesday night to thursday noon.

In that doleful place and condition was he kept close, with two doors fastened upon him, for the space of 15 weeks. And so long they suffered no friend to come near him. But, after 15 weeks, his wife, and she alone, gained admittance.

On the fourth day after his commitment, the high-commission pursuivants, under the conduct of one of the Sheriffs of *London*, and attended with the Sheriffs men, went to Dr. *Leighton's* house in *Black-friars*, under pretence of searching for *Jesuits* books. There those sons of plunder laid violent hands upon

his distressed wife, and used her with such barbarous inhumanity and indecency, as it is a shame to expresse. They rifled every person in the house; and held a pistol to the breast of a boy of five years of age, threatening to shoot him, if he would not tell where the books were; — which so affrighted the poor child, that he never recovered it all his days. They broke open presses, chests and boxes, though the family would readily have opened them, to have facilitated their search. They tore up the very boards of the house, and destroyed every thing at their pleasure. They robbed the Doctor's house, and carried off all the books and MSS. they could find. They, likewise, carried away his household-stuff, apparel, arms, and other things, leaving nothing which they had a mind to have: though Mrs. *Leighton* put them in mind, that a day of reckoning might come. They also took away a great number of Dr. *Leighton's* books from one Mr. *Archer*, with whom they had been deposited for greater security.

The keeper of *Newgate* denied Dr. *Leighton* a copy of his commitment. Upon which, his wife, with some other friends, repaired to one of the Sheriffs of *London*, offering bail, according to the statute in that behalf; which statute being shown, by an attorney at law, the sheriff replied, *He wished the laws of the land, and the privileges of the subject, had never been named in parliament, &c.*  
The



The creatures of the high-commission-court went to Dr. *Leighton* in *Newgate*, and would have examined him; but he refused to answer them, or acknowledge the authority of *that court*; though he professed himself ready to answer any officer, who came to examine him, by the king's authority.

Thus Dr. *Leighton* (having already suffered in body, liberty, family, estate and house) at the end of fifteen weeks was served with a *subpœna*, on information, laid against him by Sir Robert Heath, his Majesty's attorney-general, who went to him in *Newgate*; and (as Dr. *Leighton* himself expresses it) *used him with cruelty and deceit*. Afterwards one Reeves, another tool of Bishop Laud's, went to *Newgate*, and, with flattering, deceitful promises, got Dr. *Leighton* to confess, that he wrote the book he was charged with. After that, he went again to *Newgate*, and would have had Dr. *Leighton* to have confessed who put him upon writing the book; promising him not only pardon, but other favors, if he would frankly tell him. But Dr. *Leighton*, like a brave man, would not mention one of near 500, who had set their names to his book, by way of approbation; as knowing the miseries, to which he would have exposed them by such a nomination. Upon that refusal, he was brought into the *Star-chamber-court*, and required to put in an answer to a long invective, called an in-formation.

formation. Which he did, to the satisfaction of all unprejudiced persons. He owned the writing of the book, but said that it was done with no ill intention; his design being only to lay these things before the next *parliament*, for their consideration.

But things were carried with so high an hand, that no council dared to plead for him, nor any body to appear in his behalf.

There were other circumstances, which discovered the inveterate malice of his enemies. It did more than appear to four physicians, who examined the case, that poison had been given to Dr. *Leighton*, in *Newgate*. For his hair and skin came off, in a distemper, which was attended with loathsome symptoms. But, notwithstanding a certificate was given under the hands of those four physicians, and an affidavit made by an Attorney, that his disease was desperate, — and it was unfit to bring him into court, yet nothing would serve *Bishop Laud*; but, in the midst of that desperate disorder and great distresse, the following sentence was passed upon him, though absent; and that court unanimously decreed, *June 4, 1630*. “ That  
 “ Dr. *Leighton* should be committed to the  
 “ prison of the *Fleet* for life, and pay a fine  
 “ of 10,000 l. (*though they knew he was not*  
 “ *worth so much*) that the high-commission  
 “ should degrade him from his *ministry*; and  
 “ that then he should be brought to the pil-  
 “ lory



“ lory at *Westminster*, while the court was  
“ sitting, and be whipped. After whipping,  
“ be set upon the pillory, a convenient time;  
“ and have one of his ears cut off, one side of  
“ his nose slit, and be branded in his face,  
“ with a double S. S. for *a Sower of Sedition*.  
“ That then he should be carried back to  
“ prison; and, after a few days, be pilloried  
“ again in *Cheapside*; and be there likewise  
“ whipped, and have the other side of his  
“ nose slit, and his other ear cut off; and  
“ then be shut up, in close prison, for the  
“ remainder of his life.”

That pious, merciful, and truly Christian Bishop, Dr. *Laud*, pulled off his cap, when this horrible sentence was pronounced, and gave God thanks for it; — like one who had obtained a signal victory over his most mortal enemy.

A Knight moved one of the Lords about the dreadful nature of the sentence, intimating that it opened a gap to the Prælates, to inflict such disgraceful punishments and tortures upon men of quality. That Lord replied, “ It was only *in terrorem*, and that he  
“ would not have any one think that the  
“ sentence should ever be executed.” But Bishop *Laud* was resolved it should be executed, and accomplished his cruel intention.

Between passing the sentence and the execution of it, Dr. *Leighton* found means to escape out of the *Fleet prison*; by the assistance

ance (I suppose) of two *Scots* gentlemen, Mr. *Elphinstone*, and Mr. *Anderson*. For they were fined 500 *l.* a piece, for helping their countryman to flee from that infernal punishment. However, Dr. *Leighton* was overtaken in *Bedfordshire*, and brought back to the *Fleet*.

*November* 26, part of the sentence was executed upon him, and that in a most tremendous manner; the hangman having been plied with strong drink, all the night before; and likewise threatened, if he did not execute the sentence in a cruel manner.

When he came to the place of execution, besides other torments, his hands were tied to a stake, where he received 36 stripes on his naked back with a triple cord, every lash whereof brought away the flesh. Then he was set in the pillory, in which he stood almost two hours in cold, frost and snow. While he was in the pillory, one of his ears was cut off, one of his nostrils slit, and one cheek branded with a red hot iron, with the letters *S. S.* So that he was made a dismal spectacle of misery to God, to angels and to men.

After that, he was remanded to prison; and the next cruel handling of him we may take in the words of *Bishop Laud*, who has recorded both the executions in *his diary*. “ On  
“ that day se’night, his sores upon his back,  
“ ear, nose and face, being not yet cured,  
“ he



“ he was whiped again, at the pillory, in  
“ *Cheapside* ; and had the remainder of his  
“ sentence executed upon him, by cutting off  
“ the other ear, fliting the other side of his  
“ nose, and branding the other cheek.”

Being so broken with such terrible sufferings, he was unable to walk. However, the warden of the fleet would not suffer him to be carried in a coach ; but hurried him away, by water, to the *Fleet* ; to the further indangering of his life.

In that prison, he went through much harsh and cruel usage, for the space of eight years ; paying more for a room than the value of it ; and not being allowed a bit of bread, or drop of water, but what he or his friends paid for. And, to increase the misery of that unhappy man, the *Clerk of the Fleet* once sent for him to his office, and (without warrant, or any fresh offence given) set eight strong fellows upon him, who tore his clothes, and bruised his body, so that he never was well after ; and then carried him, head and heels, to that loathsome place, the common goal ; where (besides the filthiness of the place and vileness of the company) various projects were set on foot to take away his life.

Thus the reader has some account of Dr. *Leighton's* remarkable sufferings : but many particulars are not recited, for the sake of brevity.

In

In the year 1640. he presented a petition to the *long parliament*, setting forth a brief narrative of his great and many sufferings and hardships. — While the petition was reading, *the house of Commons* burst out into tears. And *the Clerk of that house* was ordered to stop, once and again, till they had given some vent to their compassion; and recovered themselves to such a composure of mind, as to be fit to attend and hear the rest.

When they had considered the case, they released him from prison, and voted that Dr. *Laud*, then *Archbishop of Canterbury*, should give satisfaction to Dr. *Leighton*, for the damages sustained, by 15 weeks imprisonment in *Newgate*, upon the said Bishop's warrant, &c. They likewise voted, that the fine of 10,000 *l.* the sentence of corporal punishment, the execution thereof, and the imprisonment thereupon, were all illegal. — But no sufficient reparation, in this world, could possibly be made to a man so highly injured.

Dr. *Leighton* was of a low stature, of a fair complexion, and well known for his learning, and other abilities. And he must have had an excellent constitution to have lived so long, under such cruel treatment. But his long and close confinement (added to his other sharp sufferings) had so impaired his health; that, when he was released, he could hardly walk, see, or hear.

The



The sufferings of that learned man moved the compassion of the honest and unprejudiced people; and a brief recital of them melted the house of Commons into tears: but Bishop *Laud* could pull off his cap, and devoutly thank God, when that cruel sentence was passed: and could likewise coolly meditate upon it, in his closet; and record the terrible execution of it, very minutely, in his diary; though the humane and compassionate spirit of his great Lord and Master, would have taught him to have abhorred such cruelty in others; and much more to have kept at the utmost distance from being the chief cause and author of it, himself.

Thus have I set before my reader another instance of *Protestants* persecuting of *protestants*: Such an instance this! as the records of the detestable court of inquisition can hardly furnish an example of greater cruelty.

*The Church of Rome*, indeed, seems to be incurable. And the instances of the most barbarous cruelty there, so many and so aggravated, that there is no occasion for me to recite any particular instances of that kind. Let the *Albigenses* and *Waldenses*; let *England*, *Scotland*, and *Ireland*, of old; let *Italy*, *France*, *Spain*, and *Portugal*; let the East and West *Indies*, at present; let the whole world, wherever they have had power, stand up, and be witnesses to *Popish cruelty*.

As

As for *Protestants*, they have not formerly been so guilty as *the Church of Rome*; nor am I afraid of their ever becoming so guilty.

However, to root out all remains of this leaven, it is right to hold up to their view some of the worst instances of this kind, which have happened among them; that posterity may avoid their fore-fathers faults; that *persecution*, in all the kinds and degrees of it, may be utterly detested and abhorred; and that persons of various parties may behave like *Christians*, one towards another: and, though they cannot all think alike, they may nevertheless preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace and love.

As to *Persecution*, “ it is the off-spring of  
 “ hell; tramples upon the sacred and invio-  
 “ lable rights of conscience; invades the pre-  
 “ rogative of the most high God; roots up *fair*  
 “ *Liberty*, the greatest blessing upon earth;  
 “ spreads terror and devastation all around;  
 “ and, by its baseful influence, blasts every  
 “ thing within its reach.”

As a friend, therefore, to the civil and religious liberties of mankind, and to the glory and honor of God, the benevolent maker and governor of the world; — I would do all the little that is in my power, to banish *Persecution* from off the face of the earth, and to diffuse the spirit of peace and love, which is the temper and blessing of the pure and happy mansions of immortality!

T R A C T.





AN  
E S S A Y  
CONCERNING  
The belief of things, which are *above*  
*reason.*  
IN A  
D I A L O G U E  
Between  
THEOPHILUS and PYRRHO.



THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

WASHINGTON, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

WASHINGTON, D. C.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

WASHINGTON, D. C.





A N  
E S S A Y

Concerning the belief of things, which are  
*above reason.*

I N A  
D I A L O G U E

Between

T H E O P H I L U S and P Y R R H O.



**T**HEOPHILUS and *Pyrrho* (who had spent so much time, in conversing about *the reasonableness of the Christian Religion, as delivered in the Scriptures*) continued the same friendly regards as formerly; and freely imparted their sentiments to each other, upon all subjects that occurred.

One evening, they were talking over public affairs. And *Theophilus* was expatiating upon the insolence and boundlesse ambition of such tyrannical and aspiring monarchs,

C

who

who can sacrifice the lives of thousands to their pride and vanity; who care not how many are made widows or orphans; how much trade languishes; how much the course of law is stoped; and how many towns and countries become an heap of desolation and ruine; especially where the seat of war happens to be; — or how much all the liberal arts and sciences languish, amidst the sound of arms, and the hoarse voice of war.

Have such ambitious monarchs no bowels? no humanity? none of the tender sentiments, and kind affections? I hope the time approaches, when they shall receive a proper rebuke; and be disabled, at least for one generation, from molesting the surrounding nations! and disturbing the repose and tranquillity of *Europe!*

But *Pyrrho* stoped *Theophilus*, in the midst of his pathetic oration; and gave a turn to the conversation, by saying, He knew that moral and religious subjects were most agreeable to his friend *Theophilus*: That there was one interesting subject, on which he had touched in his *reasonableness of the Christian Religion*, &c. and in the *Appendix*; that what he had there said, was intirely satisfactory to some: But that others either hesitated, or absolutely denied the truth of what he had asserted.

When *Theophilus* was going to inquire, what he referred to; *Pyrrho* said, He had lately



lately received a letter from a friend of his, who corresponded with him, upon many occasions; that the letter was intirely upon the subject he now refered to; and that therefore he would read it, if *Theophilus* pleased.

*Theophilus* gratefully accepted of his offer; upon which he read, as follows.

Dear S I R,

“ **W**HEN I have no news to impart,  
 “ I collect what materials I can, of  
 “ any other kind; to show how desirous I  
 “ am to keep up a correspondence with you.  
 “ An ingenious Gentleman of my acquaint-  
 “ ance, whom I will call *Novatianus*, was  
 “ in company with the lady *Aspasia*; who  
 “ was exclaiming bitterly against a certain  
 “ preacher, whose historical name shall be  
 “ *Eusebius*. For *Eusebius* had asserted some-  
 “ thing, in one of his sermons, which gave  
 “ the lady great offence. Upon which she  
 “ condemned him, with a warm zeal, and  
 “ great fluency of speech; and declared, *she*  
 “ *would never bear him more, as long as she*  
 “ *lived*. This occasioned the following dia-  
 “ logue between her and my friend.

“ *Novatianus*.] What was it, Madam, in  
 “ *Eusebius*’s sermon, which offended you so  
 “ much?

“ *Aspasia*.] He asserted that *we are to be-*  
 “ *lieve nothing but what we can understand*.

“ *Novatianus.*] Was that the thing, which  
 “ gave you so much offence?

“ *Aspasia.*] Yes, Sir, and enough too. I  
 “ wonder how any body can venture to as-  
 “ sert such a thing.”

“ So far the dialogue proceeded; and then  
 “ they conversed, for an hour or two, about  
 “ other matters; by which mean, this af-  
 “ fair was quite forgot. Then *Novatianus*  
 “ begged the favor of a pen and ink, and a  
 “ small piece of paper; all which a servant  
 “ readily brought him. Upon the paper, he  
 “ wrote down the following words in *Greek*,  
 “ ὁ Θεὸς ἀγάπῃ ἐστίν. and then very gravely  
 “ gave them to the lady, and desired her to  
 “ read them. That revived the dialogue,  
 “ which proceeded as follows: — *Aspasia*,  
 “ looking first upon the paper, and then  
 “ looking earnestly, and with surprize and  
 “ confusion, in *Novatianus*’s face, said, Sir,  
 “ I cannot read them. What do you mean  
 “ by this? It is not *English*, and they are  
 “ strange letters to me. I cannot imagine  
 “ what you design, by asking me to read  
 “ what I know nothing about. *Novatianus*  
 “ gravely said, Do you believe them, Ma-  
 “ dam?

“ How can I (answered *Aspasia*, with  
 “ great quickness) unless I understand  
 “ them?

“ Hold,



“ Hold, Madam, (replied *Novatianus*)  
 “ you may, surely, believe things which you  
 “ cannot understand.

“ *Aspasia*.] That is impossible.

“ *Novatianus*.] Then I find that you are,  
 “ after all, of *Eusebius*’s opinion; notwith-  
 “ standing his sermon offended you so much.

“ This startled the lady, and caused her to  
 “ say; *I professe, I believe I am wrong*. The  
 “ thing never appeared to me in this light  
 “ before. I really begin to suspect that I  
 “ was mistaken, and that *Eusebius* was in  
 “ the right. I beg his pardon for condemn-  
 “ ing him, before I had duely considered the  
 “ reasonableness of what he said. But what  
 “ is the meaning of these words? For I can-  
 “ not so much as read them.

“ *Novatianus* said, I will assure you, Ma-  
 “ dam, they are the words of holy Scrip-  
 “ ture; and that according to the original.  
 “ They contain a plane truth; and a very  
 “ great and important truth. I would,  
 “ therefore, have you try, once more, whe-  
 “ ther you cannot believe them; before you  
 “ understand them. *Aspasia* was now im-  
 “ patient to have them explained; and said  
 “ to *Novatianus*, Teaze me no longer. I  
 “ freely acknowlege, that I was too rash and  
 “ inconsiderate; and I am now fully con-  
 “ vinced that I cannot tell, whether I be-  
 “ lieve what you propose to me, or no; till  
 “ I understand what is meant thereby. Pray

“ tell me, therefore, what the words signify; and keep me no longer in suspense.  
“ As soon as I understand them, I will then tell you frankly, whether I believe them, or no.

“ Well then (said *Novatianus*) I will gratify you, by telling you that you may find the passage, 1 *John* iv. 8. and the *English* of it is, *God is love*.

“ That proposition (said *Aspasia*) I most readily and firmly believe; but I find that I could not believe it, till I understood it. I heartily beg *Eusebius*'s pardon, and sincerely condemn mine own folly and imprudence, in censuring what I ought to have applauded. I will promise you, I will go and hear him again; and shall now have a better opinion of him than ever.

“ The next time, that *Novatianus* visited *Aspasia*, she continued of the same mind; and severely condemned herself; but applauded *Eusebius*: and thanked *Novatianus*, for taking so kind and ingenious a method of leading her into right sentiments upon that head. But was ready to wonder, that she had not, before that, seen the matter in the same light; — as it appeared so very obvious, now she had attended to it, and carefully considered it.

“ I know, my friend, *Pyrrho*, that you are a speculative man; and will make reflections



“ reflections on such a story, which would not  
 “ occur to others. — Instead of news there-  
 “ fore, or business, I thought it might not  
 “ be amiss to send you this story. If it  
 “ can afford you any useful hints, it is  
 “ at your service. If not, accept it as a tes-  
 “ timony of my being ready to oblige you.

I am,

Yours, &c.

When *Pyrrho* had read this letter, *Theophilus* said, that *Novatianus* had acted like a man of sense; and that he had clearly shown that *men cannot believe what they do not understand*. How! (said *Pyrrho*) is it possible that *Theophilus* and I should think so much alike, upon such a subject? Yes (said *Theophilus*) and I further apprehend that, when the terms are explained, and persons of different sects and parties understand one another upon this head, they are more agreed, than is at first imagined. *Pyrrho* could hardly be persuaded of this; and alleged, that it was the opinion of the *infidels*, that *men must understand before they can believe*; and he observed, that they commonly charged *Christians*, and even *divines*, with being of the contrary opinion. You know very well, *Theophilus*, that *The Author of Christianity not founded on argument* has, in a sneering manner, said. “ Though men cannot be all of

“ one opinion, they may of *one faith*; which  
 “ they hold, not in unity of understanding;  
 “ but (as our *Liturgy* well expresses it) *in the*  
 “ *bond of peace and unity of spirit.*”

And again, “ I am fully persuaded, that  
 “ the judging at all of religious matters is not  
 “ the proper province of *reason*; or, indeed,  
 “ an affair where she has any concern.”

I need not point you out more passages to  
 the same purpose, in an author, which you  
 have so much studied.

*The Author of Christianity as old as the Cre-  
 ation* [p. 199, &c. of the 12<sup>mo</sup> edition,] says,  
 “ If I do not understand the terms of a pro-  
 “ position; or if they are inconsistent with  
 “ one another; or so uncertain, that I know  
 “ not what meaning to fix on them; here is  
 “ nothing told me, and consequently no  
 “ room for belief.—But, although designing  
 “ men very well know, that it is impossible  
 “ to believe, when we know not what it is  
 “ we are to believe; or to believe an absurd,  
 “ or contradictory, proposition; yet they;  
 “ because, without examination, people may  
 “ be brought to phansy they believe such  
 “ things; and it being their interest to con-  
 “ found mens understandings, and prevent  
 “ all inquiry; craftily invented the notion of  
 “ believing things *above reason*. Here the  
 “ ravings of an *Enthusiast* are on a level with  
 “ the dictates of infinite wisdom, and non-  
 “ sense is rendered most sacred: Here a con-  
 “ tradition



“ tradition is of great use to maintain a doctrine ; that, when fairly stated, is not defensible : Because, by talking backward and forward, by using obscure terms, and taking words in different senses, they may easily amuse and puzzle the people.

“ On this foundation, *Transubstantiation* is built ; and most of those mysterious propositions ; about which, in former days, *Christians* so frequently murdered each other. But, if the *Scripture* was designed to be understood, it must be within the reach of the human understanding ; and consequently it cannot contain propositions, that are either above, or below, human understanding ;” &c.

I need not repeat more of that author's words. What has been mentioned, sufficiently points out his meaning.

*Theophilus* said, that *rational divines* did not appear to him to think differently on that subject ; though it was the mean, unworthy, and ungrateful method of those, who wrote against *revelation*, frequently to throw out the most severe reflections upon those very persons, from whom they have learned all the best principles they have.

How can it be the interest of *divines* of learning and integrity, to confound mens understandings, and prevent all inquiry ? Or who have done more to promote *freedom of inquiry* ; or made a better use of it ; than  
some

some of the most celebrated divines of our own nation?

It is allowed, on all hands, that a single idea cannot be the object of assent or dissent. But, when a proposition is laid before us, and we are required to believe it; it is necessary we should understand the words, in which it is expressed, or delivered. Your friend, *Novatianus*, has clearly shown that, as long as it continues in an unknown language, we can neither believe, nor know, any thing about it.

But, suppose we understand the words, in which any proposition is expressed; or have in our minds the ideas signified by those words; it does not follow from thence, that we must immediately believe that proposition to be true. No doctrine of *divine revelation* can possibly contradict any principle of reason, or be inconsistent with it. Neither can any two doctrines, or propositions, in divine revelation be contradictory to, or irreconcilable with, one another. In such cases, the things proposed cannot be any part of *divine revelation*; though some persons may assert them to be so. Or, if the words, in which they are expressed, be contained in the divine writings, we may depend upon it, we have not yet found out the right meaning of those words.

If a proposition be self-evident, or we perceive the truth of it, by *intuition*; or, if it  
be



be proved, by a train of undoubted propositions, each of them ranged in a proper order, and connected with one another, which is termed *demonstration*; then we do not call that *faith*, but *knowledge*. If there be only probable arguments for the truth of any proposition, we call that *opinion*. If a proposition is supported by credible testimony, the assent to that is properly called *faith*. If it be the testimony of man, it is *human faith*; if it be the testimony of God, it is *divine faith*.

But, in all these cases, it is impossible to assent to that, of which we have no ideas. For that would be to believe we know not what. And, if we have credible testimony, or some other good arguments, then we have *a reason* for believing; otherwise we believe we know not why. And we ought, in all such cases, to suspend our belief, or withhold our assent.

*Pyrrho* said, I think I clearly apprehend your meaning, which I would expresse in mine own way: and I desire you would set me right; if, in any particular, I have mistaken you.

There are two parts in every proposition, a *subject* and a *predicate*; which are united in an affirmative, or separated in a negative, proposition. Now we must have the ideas affixed to the words, which expresse the *subject*, and the *predicate*; or understand the  
*subject*;

*subject*; and what is affirmed, or denied, concerning that subject. And we must, likewise, have the testimony of God, or of some credible person, for joining those two ideas together, in an affirmative proposition; or separating them in a negative proposition. And, without understanding the words, and having that, or some other, *reason*, for assenting to the proposition which they expresse, we can neither understand, nor believe any thing about them.

*Theophilus* acknowledged, that *Pyrrho* had spoken exactly agreeable to his sentiments, on this subject.

But *Pyrrho* was a man given to argue on all sides; in order to have a full view of the subject, or to see what could be alleged for, or against, any opinion. He therefore, told *Theophilus*, that the matter must not drop thus. For, though they seemed to be agreed; there were several, who would not fall in so readily with their conclusion; and therefore he desired they might further debate the matter. *Theophilus* asked him what he had to say against a thing, which seemed so plane and obvious?

*Pyrrho* answered, that he had often heard *divines* say, that, in *Scripture*, several doctrines are represented as *mysteries*; and that seemed inconsistent with the notion now advanced, viz. *that we must understand things before we can believe them.*

*Theophilus,*



*Theophilus*, with great coolness, said, I acknowledge freely that the New Testament often speaks of *mysteries*; but then that world, in *Scripture*, never signifies what is incomprehensible, or unintelligible.

I have carefully examined the sense of the word [*mystery*,] in all the places, where it is used, in the New Testament. And I am well satisfied, it never signifies *an unintelligible truth*; but *a fact*, which was formerly *a secret*, but is now made known. And, when made known, it is very plain and easy to be understood. Accordingly, the apostle speaks of a very plain and intelligible fact; when he declares, “that the Christians, who shall be found alive at Christ’s second coming, shall not die; but be suddenly changed into immortal, without dying.” And, in delivering that truth, he says, *Behold, I show you a mystery*. And, in other places, the same apostle talks of *making known the mystery of the gospel*. The truth of the case is, the Gospel is not an *hidden*, but *a revealed mystery*; made known to the world, to enlighten their understandings, to lead them to the practice of universal righteousness; and thereby, to their true dignity, perfection and happiness.

In the next place, *Pyrrho* alleged, that *Divines* had often asserted, “that we may, and ought to, believe things *above reason*, though not contrary to it.”

*Theophilus*

*Theophilus* replied, that there were two senses, in which this proposition may be interpreted. The one is, that *faith*, or what is revealed as the object of faith, contains some things which *human reason alone, and of itself*, could not have found out; but if known, at all, must be discovered by *revelation*. For instance, “that men are to be raised from the dead; that *Jesus Christ* is to judge the world.” And in this sense, I suppose, all, who acknowledge *divine revelation*, are agreed, that some of the objects of *faith* are above *human reason*; or (in other words) that there are some things discovered in the *Bible*, which could not have been known to men, unless they had been communicated by *divine revelation*.

But there is another sense, in which *faith* has, by some, been affirmed to be *above reason*; viz. that men may, and ought to, believe things, which they cannot understand, or comprehend. And, in this sense, I look upon the assertion to be groundless and false: And that, in this sense, *Faith* can no more be *above reason*, than it can be *contrary to it*.

*Pyrrho* proceeded, in his objections, and said, There are numberless things, which exceed our capacity; or which are unintelligible and incomprehensible to us, at least in the present state; and yet we firmly believe them; though we do not understand them; and therefore it is plain we may believe things which we do not understand.

*Theophilus*



*Theophilus* desired *Pyrrho* to name one of those many propositions, which he believed, though he did not understand it.

*Pyrrho* replied that, as to giving an account of his own faith, he desired to be excused; and that he was not a *Divine*, sufficiently learned and profound, readily to mention such a proposition. He intimated further, that he was representing the sentiments of others; and that he had frequently met with this objection.

*Theophilus* acknowledged that there are many things, which we do not understand. But then (said he) as long as we do not understand them, they are the objects, not of *our faith*, but of *our ignorance*. For, as long as we understand them not, the assenting to them, is, in effect, assenting to nothing; and that is, in reality, no assent at all.

Well but, *Theophilus*, (said *Pyrrho*) will you not allow that there are many things, which we actually and firmly believe; though we cannot comprehend how they are effected; or do not understand the mode, or manner, of their existence, with all their relations, connections, and circumstances? For instance, we believe that God made the world; though we do not know how he made it. We believe that the soul and body of man are united, and mutually influence one another; though we do not know how they are united, or how body and spirit can have  
such

such a mutual influence. We believe that God will raise the dead; but how he will do it, that we understand not, neither can we at present comprehend. And many more like instances might be named.

*Theophilus* replied, that the same answer might be returned to this objection, as to the last, *viz.* As far as we believe, so far we must have ideas; and that, where our ideas end, there ends our assent, or faith. Unless we understand what is meant by these words [*God created the world,*] how could we talk, or think, about such a thing? Unless we had the ideas affixed to the words [*body and spirit,*] we could not talk of their union. And, if we have no meaning to such words, then to say, *they are united*, would be to talk of the union of nothing with nothing. So likewise, we know what is meant by a man's being dead; and raised, or brought to life, again; otherwise we should mean nothing, when we speak of the resurrection from the dead. To believe that God made the world, is to believe a thing, that is both comprehensible and highly reasonable. Who should make the world, but God? Such an extensive and complicated, such a wise and glorious, production must needs have been the effect of the most consummate wisdom, goodness and power; exerted immediately by the first cause and original author of all; or by some being, that has derived his power from the first cause. From the visible creation, we are naturally



turally led up to the invisible cause and author of all ; and here is nothing incomprehensible in all this.—*That God made the world*, is one proposition. *How he made it*, would be another and a quite different proposition. The first we believe and understand. The latter we know and understand nothing of. The last, therefore, is not the object of *our knowledge*, or of *our faith*, but of *our ignorance*. *That the soul and body of man are united*, in one proposition. *How they are united*, would be another, and a quite different proposition. The first we understand and believe. The latter we know nothing of. This last therefore, again, is the object of *our ignorance*, not of *our knowledge*, or *faith*.—That men are to die, and that *Jesus Christ* will raise them from the dead, or bring them to life again, are propositions contained in Scripture ; and they are both very plane and intelligible. *How Jesus Christ will raise the dead*, is another and a quite different proposition, which God hath not seen fit to revele to us. We are not, therefore, required to know, or believe, any thing about it.—The fact, in all these cases, is one thing ; the mode, or manner, is another and a quite distinct thing. The former we understand and believe. The latter we neither understand, nor believe ; for we know nothing at all of it.

*Pyrrho* said,—*Theophilus*, suppose that God should tell you, *that a thing is so and so* ; will you not believe it, unless he acquaint

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you

you with the mode or manner of it? How it is effected, or how it exists? Or how it is reconcilable with all the other truths, you are acquainted with? *Theophilus* answered, as far as God reveles any thing, so far he explains (or discovers) it. And whatever God sais, I am very ready to assent to it; for that very reason, that God hath said it. Because whatever God sais, must be true. But I must understand what is said, as well as be satisfied that the discovery came from God; before I can believe it *as a divine revelation*. If God reveles any thing with its mode and manner, and all its relations and circumstances; then I believe that, with its mode and manner, and all its relations and circumstances. If God reveles part of a thing; as far as God reveles it, so far I believe it. *Secret things belong to the Lord our God*. They are his peculiar, and we have nothing to do with them. They cannot, therefore, be the objects of our knowlege, or of our faith.

Whatever contradicts a known truth, or is irreconcilable with it, that cannot possibly be part of *a divine revelation*. As long as I think it inconsistent with any known truth; so long I must either reject it, or suppose that I have not yet the true meaning of the words, in which it is delivered. Where our ideas are clear, there our faith may be clear. Where our ideas are confused or obscure, there our faith must necessarily be confused

or



or obscure. Where our ideas are adæquate, there our faith may be adæquate. Where our ideas are short, or partial; there our faith must be partial, or extended only to part of a thing. But where we have no ideas at all, there we can have no faith at all.

*Pyrrho* smiled and said, Surely, *Theopphilus*, you are a strange man; and I could hardly have believed it of you. What! will no objection stand before you? Nor any thing prove to you, *that men may believe what they cannot understand?* I have one objection more, which so modest a man, as you are, will scarce know what to say to. And that is, that *fathers* as well as *moderns*, *doctors* and *bishops*, *philosophers* and *divines*; eminently learned, great and good men, have contended for believing things, which we do not understand. And surely, such wise and good men could never all be mistaken; neither can it be supposed that they would have contended for this opinion, unless there had been truth and reason in it.

You yourself have acknowledged that *Tertullian* said of one article, “ I believe it, because it is impossible.” And that bishop *Beveridge* has assigned it as a reason for his believing another article of faith, “ That he “ could not conceive, or *understand* it<sup>c</sup>.”

D 2

*Theopphilus*

<sup>c</sup> See *The Reasonableness of the Christian religion*, &c. p. 132, &c.

*Theophilus* observed that, in mentioning such particulars, he had made his remarks upon them; which plainly showed he greatly disapproved of such obnoxious expressions. But *Pyrrho* said that, to show those mentioned were not singular, he could produce other celebrated persons, to confirm their opinion.

“ St, *Austin* often cites what he had read  
 “ in the 70, and vulgar *Latin*, [*If you do*  
 “ *not believe, you shall not understand,*] to in-  
 “ fer from it, *that we must believe divine*  
 “ *truths, before we understand them.* And  
 “ the croud of *Popish* writers follow him,  
 “ to authorize a blind and *implicite faith.*”

*Theophilus* replied, “ If St. *Austin* had had  
 “ an exact translation of *that passage*, he had  
 “ only read, *unlesse you believe,* [*viz. that the*  
 “ *kingdoms of Assyria and Israel shall short-*  
 “ *ly be destroyed,*] *you shall not be esta-*  
 “ *blished* <sup>t</sup>.”

*Pyrrho* owned that those, he had already quoted, were, indeed, *divines*: And he observed, that the author of *Christianity as old as the Creation* had insinuated that, “ it was  
 “ their interest to confound mens understand-  
 “ ings, and to prevent all inquiry; and  
 “ therefore they have craftily invented the  
 “ notion of believing things *above reason.*”

But

<sup>t</sup> See an essay for a new translation of the Bible, p. 63.



But there are others, who have contended for the same thing.

You have quoted Lord *Bacon* as saying something very like it". And "there have been others, as well as *divines*, persons of excellent judgment, and great friends to free inquiry; and who were never suspected of a design to impose upon, and confound, men's understandings; — that yet have thought it just to admit the notion of *things above reason*. I shall mention only two more, both of them *lay-men*, of eminent note for their attempts to inform and improve men's understandings, and promote useful knowlege, Mr. *Boyle* and Mr. *Locke*.

"That excellent philosopher, the great and good Mr. *Boyle*, has written a treatise, which he calls *a discourse of things above reason; inquiring whether a philosopher should admit there are any such. To which are annexed some advices about judging of things said to transcend reason*.

In that discourse, he ranks things *above reason*, under three heads. The first is, of things whose nature is such, that we are not able distinctly and adæquately to comprehend it. Such is the almighty God; whose perfections are so boundlesse, and his nature so singular, that it is presumption to

D 3

imagine,

\* See *The reasonableness of the Christian religion, &c.* p. 132.

“ imagine, that such finite beings, as our  
“ souls, can frame full and adæquate ideas  
“ of them. The second sort consists of  
“ things; which have properties and ways of  
“ operation, which we cannot intelligibly ac-  
“ count for, or explane, by any thing we  
“ already know. The third sort is, of such  
“ things that involve some notion, or proposi-  
“ tion; that we see not how to reconcile  
“ with some other thing, that we are persua-  
“ ded to be truth; and which are incum-  
“ bred with difficulties and objections, that  
“ cannot directly and satisfactorily be re-  
“ solved. All these he calls *privileged things*;  
“ because they surpasse *our reason*; at least  
“ so far that they are not to be judged of,  
“ by the same measures and rules, by which  
“ men are wont to judge of ordinary things.  
“ Accordingly, he puts it among the advices  
“ he gives, in judging of things that transcend  
“ our reason, that a matter of fact, or other  
“ truth, about *privileged things*, being proved  
“ by arguments, competent in their kind, we  
“ ought not to deny it; merely because we  
“ cannot explane, or perhaps so much as  
“ conceive, the *modus* of it; or because we  
“ know not how to reconcile it to some-  
“ thing that is true; or because it is liable  
“ to ill consequences, and is incumbred with  
“ great inconveniences. All these things he  
“ admirably illustrates and supports, by a  
“ variety of instances, well urged, from *Phi-*  
“ *losophy*



“ *losophy* and *natural Theology*. And con-  
 “ cludes, with observing, that we must not  
 “ expect, as to *privileged things*; and the  
 “ propositions, that may be formed about  
 “ them; to resolve all difficulties, and an-  
 “ swer all objections; since we can never  
 “ directly answer those, which require, for  
 “ for their solution, a perfect comprehension  
 “ of what is infinite.”

Here *Pyrrho* made a pause; but *Theophi-  
 lus* desired him to procede with what he had  
 to allege from *Mr. Locke*; and then he  
 would make remarks upon all his examples  
 at once.

Well then (said *Pyrrho*) “ The other  
 “ person I refer to, is the acute and sagacious  
 “ *Mr. Locke*; whom I suppose *The author*  
 “ of *Christianity as old as the Creation* would  
 “ not reckon among *those designing men*,  
 “ whose interest it is to confound men’s under-  
 “ standings. He divides things into those  
 “ which are according to reason; those things,  
 “ which are contrary to reason; and those  
 “ things, which are above reason. And these  
 “ things, when reveled, he makes to be the  
 “ proper matter of *faith*. [See *Essay on hu-  
 “ man Understanding*, Book IV. Chap. XVII.  
 “ §. 23, and Chap. XVIII. §. 7; 9.] He  
 “ frequently sets himself to point out the  
 “ shortnesse of human understanding; and  
 “ how unable we are to comprehend or ex-  
 “ plane things; of which yet we have an

“ undoubted certainty. Of these, he gives  
“ various instances. Among other things,  
“ he instances in the very notion of *body*;  
“ which is incumbred with some difficulties,  
“ very hard, and perhaps impossible, to be  
“ explained, or understood, by us. The  
“ divisibility *in infinitum*. of any finite ex-  
“ tension, involving us, whether we grant,  
“ or deny it, in consequences impossible to  
“ be explicated; or made, in our apprehen-  
“ sion, consistent. And he would fain  
“ know, what substance exists, that has not  
“ something, which manifestly baffles our  
“ understandings. [See *Essay on Human*  
“ *Understanding*, Book II. Chap. 23. and  
“ Book IV. Chap. 3. See also his works,  
“ Vol. I. Page 557; 559, 560, 561; 572.]  
“ He allows, therefore, that it cannot be a rea-  
“ sonable foundation, for rejecting a doc-  
“ trine, proposed to us, as of divine revela-  
“ tion, — that we cannot comprehend the  
“ manner of it; especially, when it relates  
“ to the divine essence: and declares, con-  
“ cerning himself, I gratefully receive, and  
“ rejoice in, the light of *divine revelation*;  
“ which sets me at rest, in many things,  
“ the manner of which my poor reason can  
“ by no means make out to me. — I readi-  
“ ly believe whatever God has declared,  
“ though my reason find difficulties in it,  
“ which it cannot master.” [Ibid. p. 361;  
573.]

Pyrrho



*Pyrrho* said, he had now done; and declared, that he would not have dwelt so much upon the sentiments of such great men, if some learned and ingenious persons had not laid so much stress upon them.

*Theophilus* answered, when an argument is fetched from the sentiments of some wise, great and good man, whose authority we reverence, and hardly dare oppose, the *Logicians* call it *Argumentum ad verecundiam*, *An addresse to our modesty*. And one would not be very forward, in directly contradicting, or opposing, men eminent for wisdom and piety. But yet, this argument may be carried too far; and prevent all farther inquiries and improvements whatever. We justly reverence the names of men of piety and learning, in former ages. But (you know) I have already declared that “ their notions  
“ are nothing to us, any further than they  
“ are supported by *reason* and *scripture*. We  
“ call no man *master* upon earth. We  
“ allow no man to *have dominion over our*  
“ *faith*. Churches and councils, fathers and  
“ moderns, learned men and celebrated di-  
“ vines have erred, and their determinations  
“ are not to be implicitly received.”

*The church of Rome* says, “ what! are you  
“ wiser than all your fathers?” And they quote great names and many authorities. But *Protestants* do not much regard such arguments against *scripture* and *common sense*. And even *Papists* themselves are not much moved

moved by such *fathers*, or authorities, as contradict their sentiments. — Mr. *Boyle* and Mr. *Locke* were truly great and good men. But they were not infallible. I suppose, in some particulars, they were both mistaken. And persons, who in this point shelter themselves under their authority, would not, in all points, be determined by their opinions; or declare that they believe, in every particular, as those great men believed. And, if they had in this point been mistaken, or talked confusedly; it would not therefore be true, or more clear, and evident, *that we can believe what we cannot understand*. I would, indeed, as soon be determined by their authority, as that of most men that can be named. But, *Amicus Socrates, amicus Plato; sed magis amica est veritas*.

All this I have said, upon the supposition, that Mr. *Boyle*, or Mr. *Locke*, had differed from me; and said, that *we must believe things which we cannot understand*.

Whereas I do not apprehend that they have said any such thing, or differ from me upon this head. They have neither of them said more than this, *viz.* that we must believe some things, which we cannot adequately comprehend; or that have properties and ways of operation, for which we cannot intelligibly account; or that there are some difficulties relating to them, which we cannot solve. — Now, wherein does this differ from



from what I have already said; unlesse in the manner of expression? Have I not said, that,  
“ Where our ideas are clear, there our faith  
“ may be clear. Where our ideas are ob-  
“ scure or confused, there our faith must ne-  
“ cessarily be obscure or confused. Where  
“ our ideas are adæquate, there our faith may  
“ be adæquate. Where our ideas are short, or  
“ partial; there our faith must be partial, or  
“ extend only to part of a thing. But where  
“ we have no ideas at all, there we can have  
“ no faith at all?”

I have likewise freely allowed, that we may understand, or believe, a thing; without understanding the mode or manner, relations and circumstances, of it. But, where our ideas end, there our faith must end. And can you allege any thing, from Mr. *Boyle*, or Mr. *Locke*, that contradicts this? How often has Mr. *Locke*, in particular, intimated that it is impossible to judge of, or assent to, any thing, without having some idea of it? And he concludes his *Chapter of faith and reason*, thus, — “ To this crying up of *faith*, in op-  
“ position to *reason*; we may, I think, in a  
“ good measure ascribe those absurdities, that  
“ fill almost all the religions, which possesse  
“ and divide mankind. For men, having  
“ been principled with an opinion, that they  
“ must not consult *reason*, in the things of *re-*  
“ *ligion*, however apparently contradictory  
“ to common sense, and the very principles  
“ of

“ of all their knowlege; have let loose their  
 “ phanſies and natural ſuperſtition; and have  
 “ been by them led into ſo ſtrange opinions,  
 “ and extravagant practices, in religion; that  
 “ a conſiderate man cannot but ſtand amazed  
 “ at their follies, and judge them ſo far from  
 “ being acceptable to the great and wiſe  
 “ GOD; that he cannot avoid thinking  
 “ them ridiculous, and offensive to a ſober,  
 “ good *man*. So that, in effect, *Religion*;  
 “ which ſhould moſt diſtinguiſh us from  
 “ beaſts; and ought moſt peculiarly to ele-  
 “ vate us, as rational creatures, above brutes;  
 “ is that, wherein men often appear moſt  
 “ irrational, and more ſenſeleſſe than beaſts  
 “ themſelves. *Credo, quia impoſſibile eſt, I*  
 “ *believe, becauſe it is impoſſible*; might in a  
 “ good man paſſe for a fallacy of zeal; but  
 “ would prove a very ill rule for men to  
 “ chooſe their opinions, or religion, by.”

From hence you plainly ſee, that this  
 great and good man is on my ſide of the  
 queſtion; and has, in other words, aſſerted  
 and defended what I am now contending  
 for.

*Pyrrho* (with a ſmile) ſaid, you will have  
 things your own way. But let us not con-  
 clude the converſation upon this ſubject, till  
 we have conſidered of what advantage it may  
 be to mankind, to have this matter ſet in a  
 clear light.

*Theophilus*



*Theophilus* was well pleased with that proposal. For he had a very great aversion to all dry and barren speculations; which may serve to amuse men, but cannot profit them.

I know (says he) some will look upon this as a dry and uselesse subject; but, to more judicious and considerate persons, it will appear to be a subject of vast extent and great usefulness.

*Pyrrho* asked, how that could be made appear?

*Theophilus* answered, that requiring men, upon pain of damnation, to believe some things, which they cannot understand, was the ready way to unhinge, disturb, and perplex the minds of many weak, but honest and well-meaning, persons. God himself is no hard master. He never requires impossibilities, as the terms of salvation; why then should men require such things, or represent God as requiring them? Why should they confound the understandings of the weak; who are easily imposed upon, and led astray? All that God requires, is, that men should assent according to evidence; make their faith a *reasonable service*; and be influenced, by it, to holiness of temper and life. The terms of acceptance are plane and easy; and the minds of good men ought not to be puzzled, and confounded, with dark, unin-

unintelligible and incomprehensible speculations.

That indeed (said *Pyrrho*) seems to be a matter of some consequence. But what have you further to allege?

*Theophilus* replied, that the making men phanfy they can believe what they cannot understand, must be of bad consequence, as it leads them to *Enthusiasm*, which is a most dangerous thing in religion. I own that “ here  
“ the ravings of an enthusiast are on a level  
“ with the dictates of infinite wisdom; and  
“ nonsense is rendered most sacred: That  
“ here a contradiction is of great use to maintain a doctrine; which, when fairly stated, is not defensible; because, by talking  
“ backward and forward, by using obscure  
“ terms, and taking words in different senses,  
“ they may easily amuse and puzzle the  
“ people. On this foundation, *transubstantiation* is built; and most of those mysterious propositions; about which, in former days, men so frequently murdered  
“ each other.”

The *rational Christian* first understands, then considers the evidence, and then believes. The *enthusiast* has a much quicker way (as he phanfies) to come at *his faith*. He has inward feelings and divine impulses: He has knowlege and conviction, darted into his mind, all at once; such clear knowlege, and strong, irresistible evidence, as satisfies himself;



himself; but is insufficient to satisfy any other person: Because it is incommunicable, and he cannot explain to another the nature and evidence of his faith; what it is he believes, or why he assents to it. He has a strong persuasion, grounded upon the conceit of *inspiration*; without clearly understanding what he believes, or professes; and without any rational or sufficient evidence, on which to ground his assent. To what absurdities must such a person stand exposed? He may believe *transubstantiation*, or any thing else. For, as in the dark, all colors are alike, so in his dark mind all the most wild and fanciful conceits, that can be named, may be entertained and zealously contended for; as the great and deep things of God, and the fundamental doctrines of religion. One absurdity, firmly and tenaciously adhered to, makes way for a thousand. For, if you will be so obsequious as to profess your belief of one thing, which you do not understand, and for which you have no evidence; why not a second, and a third, and so on? When a man is got out of the reach of his own understanding, and into the dark labyrinths of error and enthusiasm; when he renounces his *reason* to follow *phantasy*, appetite, or inclination; inward feelings, or imaginary impulses; he can have no ground for the soles of his feet to stand upon; but seems to be bewildered and gone, beyond recovery.

*Pyrrho*

*Pyrrho* observed that the man was in a bad way, who had gone that length, and that he heartily pitied him.

Ay (sais *Theophilus*) he is to be pitied; and so are all they who live around him. For, when a man phanfies that he can believe what he cannot understand, it leads him from enthusiasm into *bigotry* and *uncharitableness*. He is not to be argued with, and treated, like a rational creature. Nor is he satisfied, that he may enjoy his own unreasonable, blind and implicate faith; but his zeal hurries him on, to make converts; and to persuade others to believe, or at least to talk, as he does; — that is, without evidence, and without understanding. And, generally speaking, the more dark and unintelligible any points are, the more warmly and fiercely he contends for them. *Where the iron is blunt, he puts to more strength*, to make it cut, and wound, and destroy. The senseless and ridiculous doctrine of *transubstantiation* has occasioned the shedding the blood of more *Protestants*, than all the great and weighty matters of *the law*, and of *the gospel*.

When a man has reason and evidence for what he sais, he is ready to propose them; and that is the best way to make converts, among the sober and thinking part of mankind. For, when you have convinced an honest man's understanding, you may be sure of him. But, when a man holds ridiculous



culous opinions, and makes them fundamental articles of faith; if you deny them, or even doubt, you are reprobate, or in a dangerous state; and must be consigned over to everlasting damnation. As if these zealous defenders of the faith had got the keys of the bottomlesse pit, hanging to their girdles; and could open or shut the gates of the dark, infernal prison, at their pleasure. But, blessed be God, pronounce it who will, *the curse causelesse shall not come.* Those, who love God, and understand and believe as well as they can, shall, none of them, be rejected by the righteous and equitable judge of the universe;—though they may have been mistaken in some points of opinion; and though their over-zealous neighbors should bestow their uncharitable censures upon them; load them with hard names, and use them unkindly here, or consign them over to the misery of the world to come.

*Pyrrho* observed that *Theophilus* painted strongly, and spoke with a becoming pathos; but hoped that he could not charge the contrary doctrine with many more bad consequences.

Yes (said *Theophilus*) I have two more, which I propose to mention; and then I will detain you no longer. — The first is, That, to contend for believing what we cannot understand, is neither more or lesse than contending for implicate faith, and greatly favors

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the wretched cause of *the Church of Rome*. That most crafty and corrupt church has done all, in her power, to put out mens eyes, that they might not see; and to confound their minds, that they might not understand. She has, frequently and in many places, prohibited the free use of *the Scriptures*; taken away that key of knowlege; and neither entered into the true design and interpretation of those sacred writings herself; nor suffered those, who were willing, to enter in. She has stiled ignorance *the mother of devotion*. And what wonder! when ignorance is so much the support of that antichristian Church? She has devised the monstrous and nonsensical doctrine of *transubstantiation*; and burned great numbers at the stake, for not believing without ideas; nay contrary to *sense*, and *reason*, and the current of *holy scripture*. Methinks, I should be sorry to see any *Protestants* so far doing the work of *Papists*, as to take men off from a diligent and impartial inquiry into the grounds and reasons of their faith; or, in the least, to discourage the close and critical examination of the sacred writings; or the free, honest and open profession of a man's sentiments; after he has inquired. You know (*Pyrrho*) how warm and animated my zeal against *Popery* has always been; because I have ever looked upon it, not only as the greatest corruption of Christianity; but even a combination of a wicked faction against  
reason



reason and common sense; as well as against the rights and liberties of mankind. And, in proportion, I dislike all tendencies thereto.

*Pyrrho* could not imagine what the other bad consequence of implicate faith could be. For *Theophilus* had already named more than had occurred to him, before the mention of them. But *Theophilus* put him out of his pain, and said that he had a tender concern for the well-meaning part of *Pyrrho's* old friends; though he abhorred their principles.

What friends of mine do you mean, (said *Pyrrho*, with some eagerness) for I do not yet understand you? *Theophilus* let him know, that he designed those gentlemen, who are inclined to *infidelity*. And that, as to all those, who are men of integrity and good morals, he should be sorry to do any thing to lead them to infidelity, or to establish them therein. And that he could not but think that, to contend for believing what we cannot understand, was the way to tempt thinking men to infidelity. Not that the *Bible* itself pleads for such a faith. But the ridiculous notions and groundless opinions and arguments of some *Jews* and *Christians* have furnished those, who have wrote against *revelation*, with their most formidable objections.

It is a pity, indeed, that such persons have not looked further; and examined the *Scriptures* themselves. But, on the other hand,  
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the friends of revelation should be very careful, not to lay stumbling blocks in the way of those, who are perhaps but too ready to be pleased, when they can find any advantage against their adversaries. However, if all the friends of revelation had been of my sentiments, and as frankly declared their minds; neither Dr. Tyndal, nor any of his brethren, could have flourished and triumphed on this head, as they have done.

*Pyrrho* thanked his friend for the pains he had taken in his behalf; and said that, by parting with what cannot be defended, and separating the chaff from the pure wheat, the friends of truth would be best able to satisfy their own minds; and to give the most thorough and lasting satisfaction, unto all other attentive and well-minded persons.

T H E E N D.





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